

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, DINING  
HALL

HABS MO-1943-K  
*MO-1943-K*

(Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Building No. 23)

(Veterans Administration Hospital, Jefferson Barracks)

(Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks  
Division, Shops & Prosthetics)

VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division

1 Jefferson Barracks Drive

Saint Louis

Independent City

Missouri

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, DINING HALL (BUILDING 23)

HABS No. MO-1943-K

- Location:** Building 23, VA Medical Center, 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive,  
St. Louis, Missouri  
USGS Quadrangle Oakville, Missouri  
UTM Coordinates 16 7258372 E 9965761 N
- Date of Construction:** 1937
- Designer:** U.S. Veterans Administration (VA)
- Contractor:** Unknown
- Present Owner:** U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Present Use:** Prosthetics Facility and Maintenance Shops
- Significance:** The Dining Hall was built in 1937 as part of New Deal-era improvements to the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks. The building provided additional dining facilities for the hospital and allowed for the dining and kitchen facilities in the Main Hospital (Building 1) to be removed and renovated into space for medical records and a dental clinic. The Dining Hall continued to be used for that purpose through the early 1990s but was later converted to a prosthetic clinic, with maintenance shops on the lower level.
- Project Information:** This project was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as mitigation for the demolition of buildings at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, a property that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places via consensus determination of eligibility between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office.

**Description:**

The Dining Hall (Building 23) is a one-story stucco-clad building with a flat roof and metal replacement windows. The building is ten bays wide and six bays deep, with one main floor and a partially exposed basement—the building is constructed on a site that slopes downward from east to west, so the basement level is fully exposed on the west side of the building (the low end of the slope) but is below grade on the east side (The high end of the slope). The building's structure consists of a reinforced-concrete frame made up of concrete posts, beams, and floor and roof slabs. Wall areas between the concrete posts are filled in with brick and terra-cotta block. None of the structural materials are visible on the exterior of the building since the entire exterior is covered in stucco. The lower level of the interior retains some aspects of the original floor plan and some exposed structural elements, but the upper floor has been heavily remodeled and contains no original interior finishes. The building no longer serves as a dining hall, the upper floor is now used as a prosthetic clinic, and the basement is used for maintenance facilities.

The facade of the Dining Hall's is the east wall, which features four sets of paired metal replacement windows and a set of metal and glass double doors with a transom. The wall also has several single replacement windows and a metal three-light door. The portion of the facade that has paired windows projects forward. The facade also features a small stucco belt at roof level, with a plain stucco parapet above the belt. A gutter system is hidden behind the parapet, although metal downspouts are visible.

The north and south walls of the building have replacement double-hung metal windows and include a stucco belt and parapet. An above-ground connector corridor is attached to each of these walls in the center of the wall. The connector on the south wall of the Dining Hall leads to the Main Hospital (Building 1), and the connector on the north wall leads to the former Attendants' Quarters (Building 4). The western portions of the north and south walls have windows on the main floor and in the basement level since the site slopes down low enough at this part of the building that the north and south walls of the basement level are partially exposed.

The west (rear) wall is a full two stories high because it is on the low end of the slope and the west wall of the basement level is fully exposed. The basement floor features a series of replacement double-hung metal windows, a loading dock with a concrete base, a series of stucco-clad walls, and a flat slab concrete roof. The upper floor features three double-hung metal replacement windows. The building also features a small third-floor penthouse structure that is very small and has one double-hung metal replacement window.

The interior of the basement is divided up into a series of corridors, offices, and shop spaces that are used by the hospital maintenance staff. The walls are a mix of concrete and gypsum board, and concrete ceilings are exposed in some areas. The main level of the

building was once occupied by an open dining hall and a kitchen, but this floor has been divided into smaller spaces within the last twenty years in association with its conversion to a prosthetic clinic. The main floor has gypsum board walls, acoustical drop ceilings, and fluorescent lighting.

### **History:**

The U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, was part of an early 1920s plan to reform health care for veterans. Before the early 1920s, health care for veterans had in many cases been dispensed from improvised facilities that were in poor condition and not well suited for the task. After a well-publicized tour of some of these hospitals, the U.S. Veterans Bureau began planning and construction on new, modern hospitals throughout the United States. Planning for the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, including drafting of construction drawings, took place in 1922. Construction on the hospital complex began in 1922, and the buildings were completed in 1923.

The Dining Hall (Building 23) was part of a late 1930s expansion of the hospital, which by then was affiliated with the Veterans Administration, the agency that replaced the Veterans Bureau in 1930. Before the construction of the Dining Hall, the main kitchen and dining facilities for the hospital campus were in the central block of the Main Hospital (Building 1).

In the mid-to-late 1930s, several buildings were constructed at the hospital to accommodate activities that were originally housed in the Main Hospital. This work upgraded recreational, dining, and employee quarters at the VA Hospital campus, and also allowed more space inside the Main Hospital to be converted to medical uses. The Recreation Building (Building 24) was constructed in 1936 to replace recreational rooms and a theater in the basement of the Main Hospital. The Dining Hall was built in 1937 to replace kitchen and dining facilities in all three floors of the center wing of the Main Hospital. The construction of Nurses' Quarters 2 in 1939 also appears to have allowed the old Attendants' Quarters (Building 4) to be converted to a hospital ward building.

The Dining Hall was designed by Veterans Administration staff, and the building's exterior was fairly plain and stucco-clad, resembling the hospital's utility buildings like Laundry 1 (Building 6) and the Storehouse (Building 8), which had been constructed in the 1920s in less prominent locations on the campus. Original plans for the Dining Hall from March 1937 show one main floor and a basement.

The main floor included three large spaces. The first main space was the kitchen, which appears to have been divided in half to provide two full institutional food-preparation areas that could operate independently. In addition to these food-preparation areas, this part of the building also had three walk-in refrigerators, an alcove for pots and pans, an office

space for the dietician, and a storage room.<sup>1</sup> The second major first-floor space was a dining-room complex in the center of the building; this area included a dining room for attendants and a second dining room for other personnel. In between the two dining rooms was a block of two smaller rooms that consisted of a dishwashing room and a serving space with equipment like food warmers, bread-slicing equipment, and an ice cream serving area. The third major space on the first floor was a large, open dining room that sat east of the serving space. This large open room contained eighty tables and was the largest dining space in the building.

The basement of the Dining Hall contained important facilities for food preparation and storage; rooms here included the bakery, spaces for storing flour, meat and vegetable preparation rooms, refrigeration facilities, and toilet and locker room facilities for the food-service workers. The basement also held specialized facilities for ice cream and ice.<sup>2</sup>

With the construction of the Dining Hall, a connecting corridor system was inaugurated at the Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital campus to link the most important buildings. The 1937 Dining Hall construction drawings show a future connecting corridor linking it to the Main Hospital (Building 1).<sup>3</sup> By 1940, connecting corridors linked the Dining Hall to the Main Hospital and also to the Attendants' Quarters (Building 4), which by this time appears to have been converted to hospital space that may have functioned as a segregated facility for African Americans only.<sup>4</sup> The corridors allowed for easier control of patients and also provided a way for patients to go to and from the Dining Hall without going outside.

On a 1950 master plan map for the Jefferson Barracks VA facility, the Dining Hall was still represented as a dining facility and kitchen.<sup>5</sup> A new building known as the Kitchen (Building 60) was completed in 1952 as part of upgrades that converted the Jefferson Barracks VA facility from a general medicine hospital to a neuropsychiatric hospital. However, the Dining Hall appears to have continued to function as a kitchen and dining facility. By 1990, the Dining Hall was still listed as a kitchen and dining facility on VA property lists, although maintenance-shop and patient-clothing storage functions had been moved into the building's basement by then.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Veterans Administration, *Dining Hall, Building No. 23, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.*, 1937, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Veterans Administration, *Alterations to Hospital Building No. 4, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.*, 1940, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>5</sup> Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers, *544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Master Plan*, 1950, on file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Annual Real Property Survey Report, Building Numbers and Locations, Jefferson Barracks VAMC*, 1990, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Today, the main floor of the Dining Hall has been heavily remodeled and is used as a prosthetic clinic. The basement still retains exposed concrete structural elements such as roof beams and ceilings, and is used for building maintenance shops. Current redevelopment plans for the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, do not call for the demolition of this building in the near future.

**Sources:**

Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers. *544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Master Plan*. 1950. On file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

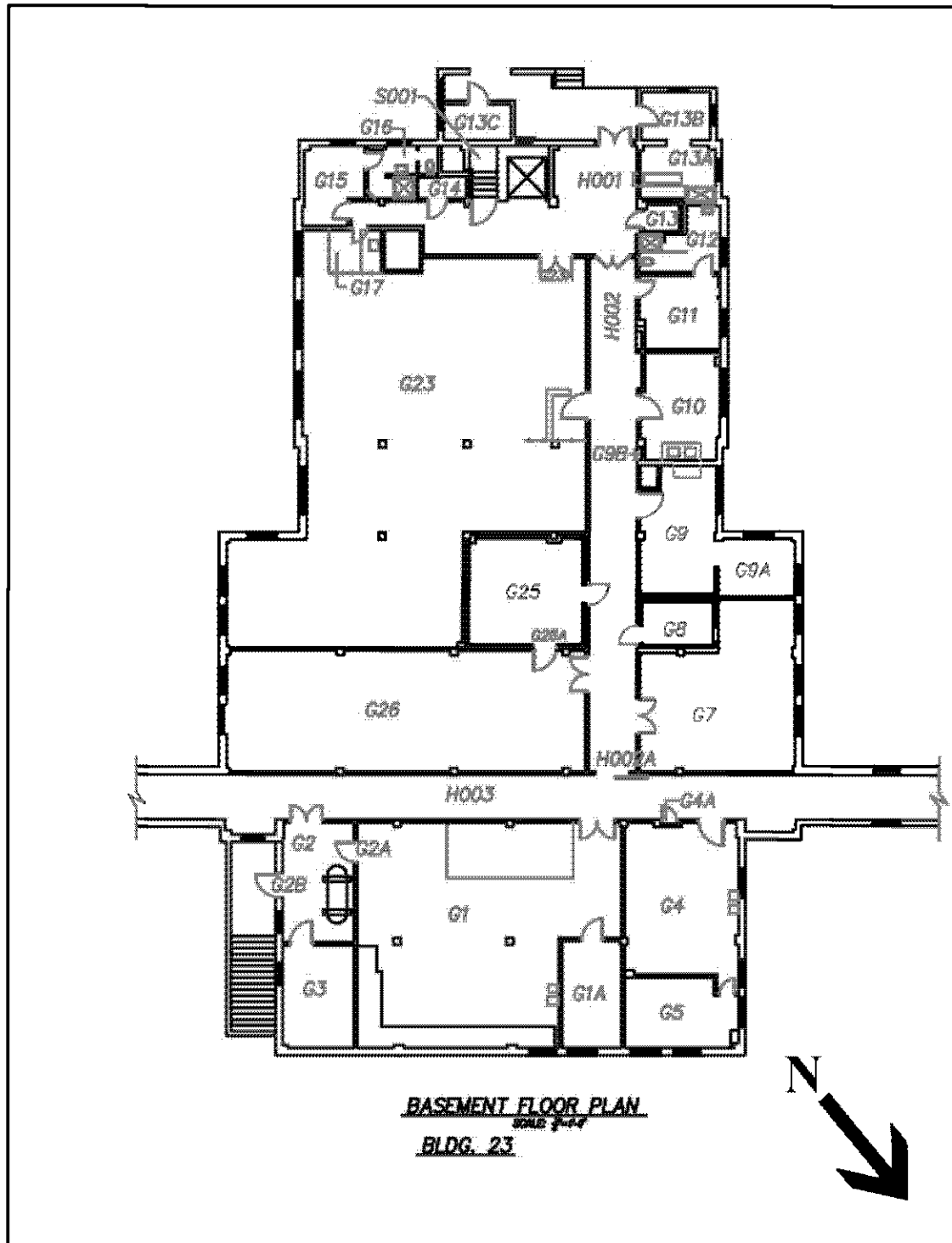
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. *Annual Real Property Survey Report, Building Numbers and Locations, Jefferson Barracks VAMC*. 1990. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

U.S. Veterans Administration. *Dining Hall, Building No. 23, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.* 1937. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

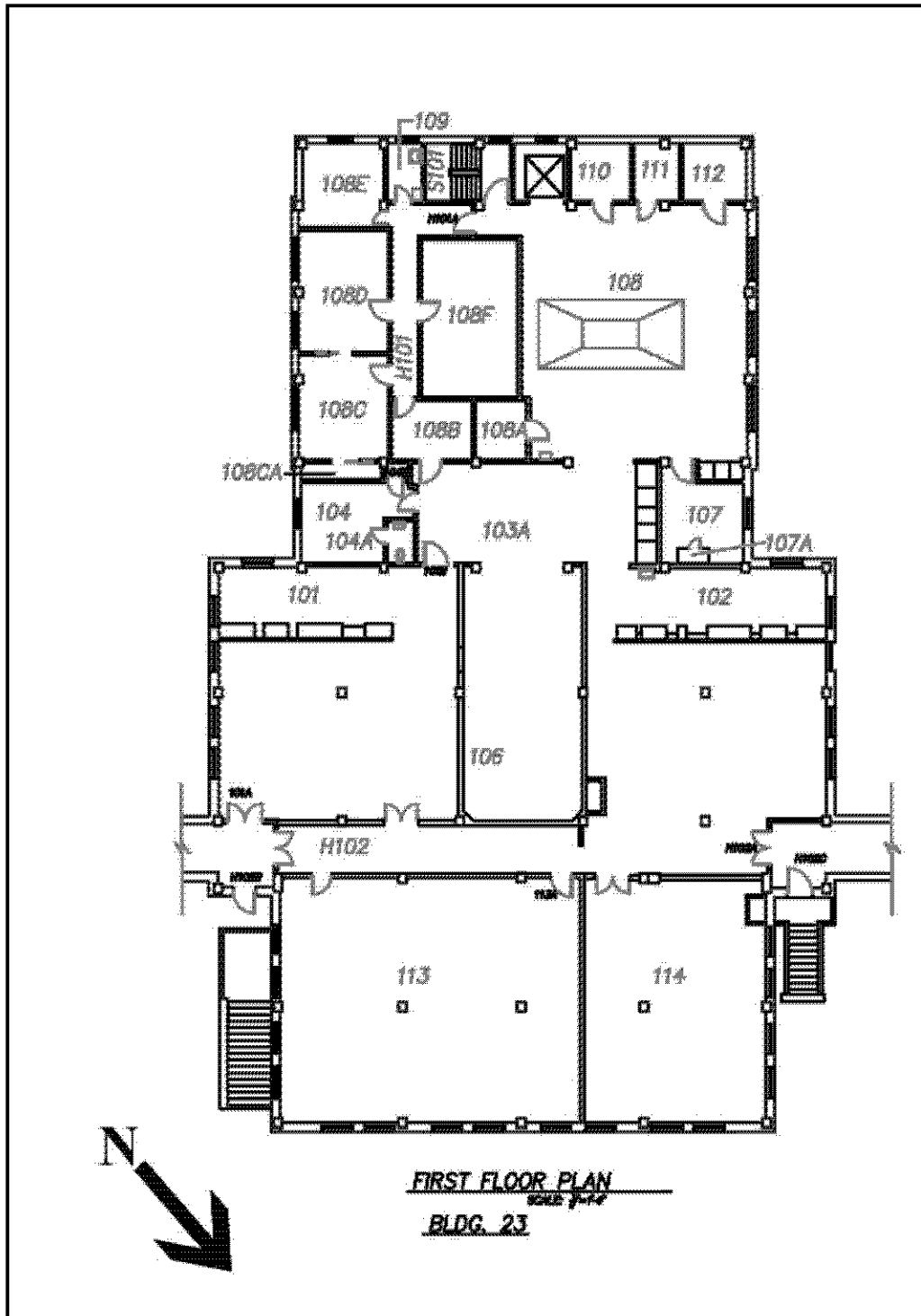
———. *Alterations to Hospital Building No. 4, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.* 1940. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

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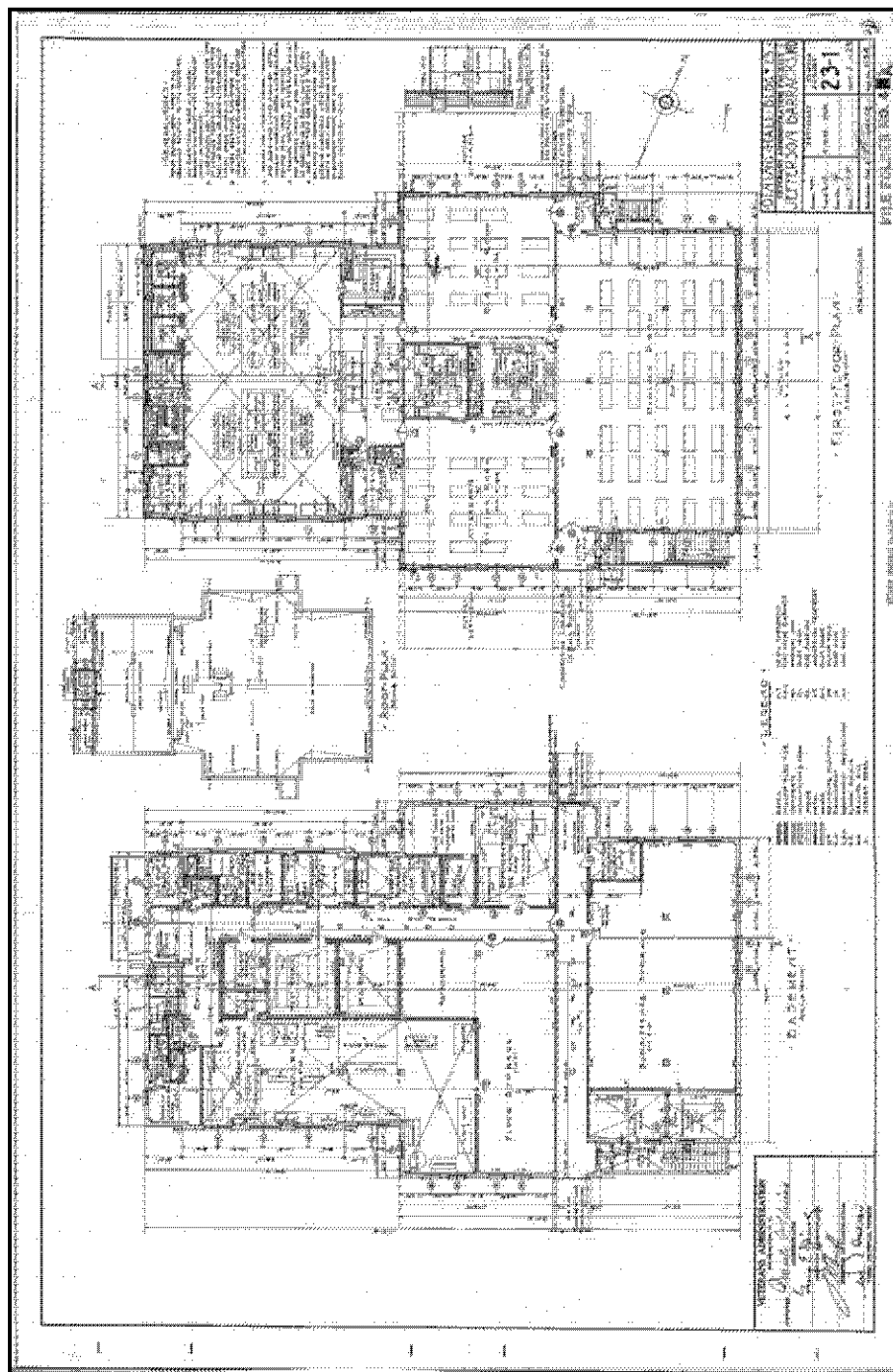
Dining Hall (Building 23), current floor plan of basement



Dining Hall (Building 23), current floor plan of first floor



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Original floor plans for the Dining Hall (Building 23), 1937